



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 95.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 24, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

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By HARRY MOORE.



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No. 95.

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 24, 1902.

Price 3 Cents.

CHAPTER I.

A SPIRITED MAIDEN.

"Just one kiss, my pretty miss!"

"I'll take one, sis."

"So will I."

"You may count me in on that too."

"That will be only four kisses, miss, and you will never miss them—never."

An interesting scene.

In the road, where it wound through a strip of timber, at a point three miles from Middlebrook, New Jersey, were four men and a beautiful maiden of perhaps seventeen years. It was in the month of June, of the year 1777, and the four men wore the brilliant uniform of the British army, this proving them to be soldiers of the king.

The maiden was dressed in the blue cotton goods of home-spinning, but the simple dress fit her superb form splendidly, and she was indeed a beautiful girl, her face being fair, with regular features, her eyes blue and clear, her teeth pearly, her lips red, and her hair luxuriant and handsome. The hair was braided and hung down her back, the end being tied with a bit of red ribbon.

The girl had been making her way along the road on foot, and had suddenly been confronted by the four redcoats, who had been playing cards under the shade of a tree by the roadside.

As soon as they had confronted the maiden, and brought her to a stop, the redcoats gave utterance to the exclamation with which this story opens.

The girl stood at bay, and seemed more angry than frightened. Her face was flushed, and there was a flash in her eyes and a scornful curl to her lips, as she faced her tormentors.

"Let me pass," she said, in a sweet, musical voice, which trembled a bit in spite of her efforts to prevent it.

"Let you pass, you say, miss?" laughed the one who seemed to be the ruling spirit of the four.

"Yes, let me pass. I am in a hurry."

"Very well; we will let you pass—just as soon as you have paid the toll," and the fellow laughed sardonically, the other three joining in the laughter.

"I shall pay no toll, as you term it, sir," was the reply.

"Ah, young lady, but you must," was the decided declaration.

"Must?"

"Yes. You should be more than willing to give us the kisses, miss," the fellow said, with a leer; "for just think of our position. Here we are, three thousand miles from our homes and sweethearts, and we haven't had a kiss for a long, long time. You should take pity on us, and give us the kisses without a word."

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

"You won't?"

"I will not."

"But, miss, consider——"

"I shall consider nothing. You are impertinent puppies, and I ask you once more to let me pass."

The faces of the redcoats flushed with anger. They did not like to be called puppies, even by a girl, and there was almost a fierce look on the leader's face as he said:

"Well, if you won't give us the kisses, we will take them."

"You will not dare!"

"Oh, won't we?" sneeringly.

"No, you will not."

"I would like to have you tell me why not," with a scornful laugh. "We have made up our minds to have the kisses, and since you have got your back up and have called us names, we shall not be satisfied with just one apiece, but will take half a dozen."

"You will do nothing of the kind," the girl cried, as firmly as possible. "Stand aside and let me pass."

"We couldn't think of it, my pretty miss."

"Stand aside, or you will be sorry."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the leader.

"Just listen to her."

"Isn't she a saucy miss, though."

"It makes her look sweeter and more kissable than ever."

The girl's face flushed even more crimson, and she made a move as if to pass the redcoats, but they maintained their position in front of her, and waved her back.

"Oh, don't be in a hurry, miss," said the leader, sneeringly. "You can't escape, so might as well make the best of the situation."

"Gentlemen, I beg of you to let me pass," the girl said.

"She calls us 'gentlemen,'" laughed one, sarcastically.

"I take the word back," was the quick reply. "It was a slip of the tongue. No men who will stop a girl on the highway, and torment her as you are doing can by any stretch of the imagination be made seem like gentlemen."

"Ha, ha, ha! She's hitting us hard, eh, fellows?" laughed another.

"Yes, that was a strong blow, to come from such sweet lips," from another.

"My rule is to give a kiss for a blow, always," grinned a third, and he made a motion as if to step forward and kiss the girl.

"Stand back!" the girl cried, making a restraining motion with her hands. "If you are men you will not torment me further, for I have a brother who wears the same kind of uniform that you are wearing."

"You have a brother in the British army, miss?" asked the leader.

"Yes."

"What is his name? Perhaps we know him."

"His name is Tom Warner."

"Warner—Warner—no, I have never heard of him. Have you?" turning to his comrades.

They shook their heads.

"I haven't."

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

The leader smiled in a manner intended to indicate that he was very shrewd, and that he understood the matter fully.

"You can't fool us that way, miss," he said. "That scheme won't work."

"What scheme?" in surprise.

"Pretending to have a brother in the British army."

"Pretending."

"Yes."

An angry light glowed in the girl's eyes.

She straightened up, and her lips curled with scorn, as she said:

"Do you mean to say that you doubt my word?"

"Well, we think it a bit doubtful about your having a brother in the British army, miss, to tell the truth. Of course, we hate to have to doubt the word of a pretty girl like you, but in this case we must do it."

"But I have told you the truth. I have a brother in the British army."

"Where is he stationed?"

"He is with the main force, in New York."

"But the main force isn't in New York now."

"It isn't?"

"No."

"Where is it?"

"It is marching southward on New Jersey soil."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"Where is it bound for?"

The man was about to reply, when one of his companions gave him a warning look, and he caught himself, and said, with a grin:

"Really, miss, you must not ask so many questions."

"Why not?"

"Because, you might make us think you are a rebel spy, and that would be much worse for you than it is at present, when all you have to do is to give us a few kisses and go on your way rejoicing."

"But if my brother is coming this way I wish to know it."

"That's all right; if he wishes to have you know he is coming, he will let you know, without doubt. That is nothing to us. We have our own business to attend to."

"Why don't you go and attend to it, then, and let me go on my way?"

"We will, just as soon as you give us the kisses."

"Which I shall never do."

"Then we'll take them."

"You had better be careful. If my brother should learn that you insulted his sister in this fashion it would go hard with you."

"Oh, we are not afraid of your brother," with a laugh. "In fact, we think he is a myth, anyway."

"That is where you make a mistake, comrades."

The voice was cool and calm, and came so unexpectedly that the four men whirled, with exclamations of amazement, and found themselves confronted by a handsome young man of perhaps twenty years.

"It's brother Tom," cried the girl, her voice ringing out joyously. "Oh, Tom, I'm so glad you came."

But the redcoats were not glad, evidently.

They glared at the newcomer angrily and, cely, and the leader of the four cried out:

"Where did you come from?"

"From out the timber, just back of me, here," was the cool reply.

"Who are you?"

"Tom Warner, at your service."

"You are not a British soldier."

"Begging your pardon, but I am."

The young man was cool and composed. He was a handsome fellow, and it was easy to see that he was the girl's brother, for they greatly resembled each other.

"You are a British soldier?" The redcoat's tone betokened unbelief.

"I am."

"Where is your uniform?"

"Back at camp."

"Why have you doffed it?"

"That is easy to answer. I am on my way to visit my parents and sister, here, and as this part of the country is likely to be overrun by rebels, I donned a suit of citizen's clothing in order to be safer."

"So that's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"And a very pretty story it is."

A glint of fire came into the young man's eyes.

"You don't believe it?" he asked calmly, but there was that in his tone which showed he had hard work in holding his anger in check.

"No, I don't believe it," was the blunt reply.

"Why should you doubt it?"

"That's simple enough."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"Then explain."

"Well, you were in the timber, there, and heard us talking to the girl."

"Yes, that is true."

"You heard her tell us she had a brother in the British army."

"That is true, too."

"So in order to get her out of this affair you stepped out here, and, taking the cue given you, proclaim yourself a British soldier."

"I am one."

"Bah!"

"I am a British soldier," went on the young man, in calm, even tones. "But since being witness to this scene, where you have stopped a defenseless girl on the highway

with the avowed intention of forcing her to let you kiss her, I can truthfully say that I am almost ashamed of the fact that I am a British soldier."

There was such scathing scorn and contempt in the young man's voice that the redcoats winced, and their faces flushed with anger.

"Say, let's not stand here and let the fellow talk to us in that fashion," growled one.

"That's what I say," from another.

"Let's teach him a lesson," from a third.

"You are too saucy, altogether," declared the leader, "and now, I will tell you what we will do."

"What?"

"We will give you just one-half minute in which to get away from here."

"You'll give me half a minute in which to get away from here?"

There was scorn and contempt in the young man's eyes and tone.

"Yes."

The young man laughed aloud.

"Well, you needn't do anything of the kind," he cried. "What kind of a fellow do you think I am, to go off and leave my sister to be tormented and insulted by you cowardly scoundrels?"

"What's that! You dare call us cowardly scoundrels?"

"That's just what you are, and it doesn't take much daring to tell you so."

"Oh, you think that, do you?" in a threatening tone.

"I am sure of it."

"Bah! You had better go."

A frown came over the face of Tom Warner. His eyes almost blazed, as he took a step forward, and glared in the face of the speaker.

"You scoundrel," he cried, his voice vibrating with anger. "I could hardly have anything said to me that would make me angrier than what you have just said, for it insinuates that I would be coward and poltroon enough to go away and save myself at my sister's expense. As I love her as a brother should love a sister, and would die to protect her, if it was necessary, you can readily see that I am not going to go away."

"All right. Then you must take the consequences."

"What will the consequences be?"

"If you attempt to interfere with us, death will be the consequences."

"Death, eh?"

"Yes."

"And what are you going to do?"

"We are going to have those kisses from the sweet lips of your pretty sister."

"You will have to kill me first," cried the young man.

"Yes, and me, too!" cried another voice, and a handsome young man of perhaps nineteen years leaped from behind a tree and was beside Tom Warner in a jiffy.

In his hands were a pair of cocked and leveled pistols, and the muzzles stared threateningly in the faces of the four redcoats.

CHAPTER II.

A BOLD YOUTH.

The four British soldiers stared at the newcomer in amazement, not unmixed with consternation.

They had not been looking for this.

It came in the nature of a surprise, and an unpleasant one at that.

"Who are you?" cried the leader of the gang, after a brief period of glaring at the youth.

The newcomer smiled blandly.

"You wish to know who I am?" he asked.

"That's what I asked."

"Well, I am thankful, after seeing your actions, here, for the past five minutes, that I can truthfully say I am not a British soldier."

A growl escaped the lips of the four, but Tom Warner, who also claimed to be a redcoat, smiled grimly, as if he enjoyed the youth's statement.

"You are insolent," the spokesman of the four cried.

As he spoke he made a move as if to put his hands on his pistols, but the young stranger shook his pistols threateningly, and said in a low but firm and stern voice:

"Keep your hands off your pistols, my redcoat friend."

"What will you do if I don't?"

"I'll put a bullet through you," was the prompt reply, delivered in rather a matter-of-fact tone, as if doing such things was an every-day, or every-hour occurrence.

"You wouldn't dare," growlingly.

"I wouldn't dare?" with a smile that was mocking.

"That's what I said."

"Well, my dear friend, you don't know what you are talking about when you make such statements. I would not hesitate a moment. Why should I?"

"For the reason that if you were to shoot me my comrades would make short work of you."

"I mean to say that you doubt my word?"

The young stranger smiled.

"I don't think they would," he said calmly.

"You don't?"

"No."

"You would find out."

"So would they."

"Bah! What could you do against three?"

"I could shoot at least one of the three dead, and my comrade, here, would help me finish the other two."

"But he is a British soldier. If he were to lift his hand against his comrades he would be shot or hanged for a spy."

"Oh, no."

"Yes he would."

"Not at all. He has a perfect right to protect his sister from insult, no matter who the insulter may be. If King George himself were in your shoes he would deserve shooting, just the same as you fellows do, and he would undoubtedly get shot, unless he pulled himself up with a round turn and went about his business."

Tom Warner had a word to say at this juncture.

"You fellows needn't think that because I am a British soldier I will spare you if it comes to trouble between us," he said sternly. "You should act like British soldiers and gentlemen if you wish to be treated that way."

"That's right," said the stranger, approvingly.

The four redcoats frowned and looked disconcerted.

The girl had made her way around, and was now standing beside her brother, to whom she said something in a whisper. When she had finished, he turned his eyes on the four and said:

"If my friend, here, does not object, you four fellows may go."

"Oh, I don't object," was the prompt reply from the young stranger. "I simply took part in this affair for the sake of the young lady, and have no objections to the red-coated gentlemen taking their departure."

"But we have," said the leader in rather a fierce tone.

"We are in no hurry to go, I assure you."

"It would be better for you if you were, perhaps," was the significant reply of the youth with the pistols.

"I don't think so." And then, addressing Tom Warner, he went on: "You still say you are a British soldier?"

Tom Warner bowed.

"I am a British soldier," he replied.

"Very well. I have a proposition to make to you. We apologize to your sister, and beg her and your pardon for addressing her as we did, and that being settled, now I ask

at you let us settle with this saucy young stranger, who, am confident, is a rebel."

The young man with the pistols did not say a word, but kept his eyes on the four, and the pistols still leveled, but there was a peculiar smile on his face, and he did not seem to be a bit alarmed or disconcerted by the turn the redcoats were attempting to give affairs.

Again the girl whispered in her brother's ear, and he nodded his head.

"What kind of a fellow do you think I am?" he asked, stern in his tones. "Do you think that after this young man has come to my assistance, when you were threatening me, that now that you have arranged matters between us, I am willing to step aside and let you attack him with the odds of four to one in your favor?"

"Go ahead, and let them have their way, Tom," said the young man, coolly. "I am not afraid of the whole gang. I am willing to fight the four of them."

The four redcoats, and Tom Warner and his sister as well, stared at the bold youth in amazement, and in the eyes of the last two named there shone admiration.

"Oh, but that would never do," said Tom. "Four against one is too great odds."

"Not when the four are cowardly scoundrels, such as these four," was the cool reply of the stranger youth. Exclamations of anger escaped the lips of the four.

"You hear that?" said the leader, addressing Tom. "He thinks he is able to defeat the four of us, so let him make the attempt."

"I can't agree to do that," said Tom, shaking his head. "I insist that you fellows go your way."

"It will be much better for them if they do so," said the stranger, calmly, "but if they insist on having a go with me I am quite willing."

"What could you hope to do against four men?" asked Tom, with an air of interest.

"I could, and probably would kill the last one of them," was the calm reply.

So calm and confident was the statement, and so utterly without bravado, that the hearers stared, and the four redcoats exchanged glances. They did not like the youth's tone; neither did they like the idea of giving up the thought of getting even with the youth.

"I think you are about the biggest braggart I have ever seen," growled the leader of the four.

"You are mistaken. There is nothing of the braggart about me. I am simply making statements of fact."

"Why, you could not kill the four of us."

"You think not?"

"I know it. There does not live any one man who could defeat the four of us in an open encounter."

"I stand ready to prove my words," was the calm reply. "If you hunger for my blood, and will not be satisfied without making an attempt to cause it to flow, just step away, up the road a distance of one hundred feet. Then draw your pistols and come for me, and see what will happen."

"Well, what would happen?" the leader asked, curiosity in his voice.

"Well, the chances are that within half a minute of the time you turn and start toward me the four of you will be lying in the road, either dead or dying."

The four stared wonderingly. If this strange youth had spoken in the manner characteristic of braggarts and boasters in general they would have accepted his proposition offhand, and would have gone into the affair with zest, thinking to have a sort of picnic. But there was nothing of the bravado in the youth's air or tones, and the four hesitated.

"You must have a great deal of confidence in yourself," said the leader, sneeringly.

The youth nodded.

"I have," he replied; "the greatest confidence in the world."

"Confidence born of ignorance, doubtless."

The youth smiled.

"Confidence born of experience," he said, calmly.

"Oh, you've had experience, have you?"

"I have."

"You have fought before to-day, then?"

"Oh, yes."

"Perhaps you are a soldier?"

"Perhaps."

"I was sure of it," said the leader. "He is a rebel, fellows, and I think that we ought to take him up on his proposition, and put him out of the way."

At this juncture the girl spoke.

"I protest against this, sir," she said, addressing the young stranger. "Four of them against you will be too great odds, and you must not make the attempt to fight them alone."

"You need not fear for me, miss," was the quiet reply.

"They are the ones who are in need of your sympathy."

"Just listen to the fellow," growled the leader of the four. "Come on, boys. We will take him up on his proposition."

"Remember, I don't urge you to do so," said the youth.

"It will result disastrously for you, and I would not like

to feel that I had been the means of persuading you into something that will result to your disadvantage."

"Oh, don't fret about us," sneeringly. "We know enough to take care of ourselves."

"You no doubt think you do."

"We know it."

"You will soon learn that you are mistaken."

"Bah! Come on, boys. We'll soon teach this boastful rebel a thing or two."

"Take care that he doesn't teach you a thing or two while you are doing it."

"Bah!"

The four redcoats turned away, and walked up the road, drawing their pistols as they did so.

As they moved away the young man turned to Tom Warner.

"Will you lend me the use of your pistols for a few minutes, Tom?" he asked.

"Certainly," was the reply. "But I would much rather that you would permit me to take my place beside you and use them myself."

"Yes, yes, brother. It is only right that you should do so," said the girl. "The gentleman got himself into this trouble on our account, and it is only right that you should help him in his encounter with the men."

"But you are a British soldier," said the young man, "and I would not wish you to lay yourself liable to being shot or hanged for treason. Just let me have your pistols. It will be as good as if you were in the encounter, anyway, for I am a quick and dead shot, and will be able to drop the four of them before they can injure me, I am confident."

"No; let me assist you," said Tom. "Sister, here, is a patriot, and I will represent her in this encounter with the four British soldiers."

"The officers in the British army would not accept that as an excuse for your taking up arms against comrades," was the reply, "so I must object to your doing so. Just give me the pistols, and then take your sister to one side far enough so as to be out of danger from wild bullets, and then see me beat the four of them."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said Tom Warner, as he handed the youth his pistols; "if you defeat the four men I will desert the British army and espouse the cause of Liberty and Independence from this day forth."

"Good enough," said the youth. "You may consider yourself a patriot right now."

"I hope so," said Tom in a low voice, but it was evident that he feared it would not turn out that way. He found

it hard to believe that one man could successfully

four. "Oh, sir, do let brother help you," pleaded the girl, ing her hand on his arm and looking beseechingly up in youth's face.

"There is not a bit of use of it, miss," was the smiling reply. "I will soon put those fellows to rout."

Then with a pistol in each hand he stepped out in middle of the road and faced the four redcoats, who paused and turned around.

"Are you ready?" called out the leader of the four.

"Yes, I'm ready," was the prompt reply.

"You still wish the affair to go on, then?"

"I don't wish it to, as I have no desire to take the life of you men, but if you wish to have it go on, just come ahead whenever you are ready, and I will take care of you."

"All right. We'll take the conceit out of you, my friend."

"Perhaps so; perhaps not."

"You'll see."

"Oh, stop talking and get to work," in an impatient tone of voice.

"All right. Ready, boys? Then go for the rebel."

With the words the four men started toward the handsome, bold young stranger, flourishing their pistols in threatening manner as they came.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE WARNER HOME.

The youth stood erect, his arms down by his side, the muzzles of his pistols pointing at the ground. There was a calm look of confidence on his face; he was almost smiling, in fact.

The four redcoats had gone a distance of perhaps one hundred and fifty feet before turning, and now the youth waited till they had advanced a bit more than one-third of the way before making a movement.

He was watching the four keenly, however, and he made up his mind that they were on the point of firing, and quickly raised his pistols, as if to open fire.

The youth knew it was too far to enable one to do damage, unless one was an expert with the pistol, and his plan was to get the four to fire while at this distance.

The ruse worked like a charm. The four thought the youth was about to fire, and in the hope that they might

shot ahead of him and bring him down before he could fire shot they leveled their pistols and fired.

They fired in such haste that they had not taken aim at all, and as the youth had expected would be the case, the bullets went wide of the mark.

"Ha, ha, ha!" the youth laughed. "You are fine shots, must say. Why, you couldn't hit the side of a barn."

A yell of rage went up from the four, and they quickly drew their other pistols, and leveling the weapons, started to take aim.

The youth was not willing that they should do this undisturbed, however, and suddenly he leaped forward with a shout, and ran straight toward the four.

So astonished and disconcerted were they by this unexpected maneuver that they did not wait to take aim this time, but fired quickly.

This was what the youth had wished for, and as in the former instance, the bullets went wild, with the exception of one, which by some accident struck the youth's hat, knocking it off his head. The bullet just grazed the youth's head. An inch lower, and it would have ended his days.

He gave this matter no thought, however, but continued running toward the four redcoats. He had all the advantage on his side, now, for he had tricked them into emptying their pistols, and they were practically at his mercy.

Suddenly the youth stopped, and up came the pistols. The youth did not dwell an instant. He did not seem to take aim at all.

Crack, crack! went the weapons, and two of the redcoats uttered wild yells of pain, dropped their pistols, and began dancing wildly about in the road.

Thrusting the empty weapons back in his belt, the youth drew two more.

Up came his arms, the weapons were leveled, and again came two shots in quick succession.

The other two redcoats, who had paused, and were standing irresolute, dropped their pistols and gave utterance to howls of pain, and they, instead of stopping and dancing about, turned and fled toward the edge of the timber at the top of their speed.

The youth quickly returned the empty weapons to his belt and drew two more fresh weapons, but the two wounded redcoats did not wait for him to shoot. They took to their heels, and ran after their fleeing comrades.

The youth did not fire. Instead, he paused, looked after them with a smile, and then turned and sauntered back to where Tom Warner and the girl stood.

Tom seized one of the youth's hands and the girl seized the other, and both shook the hands heartily.

"That was the most wonderful performance I ever saw," exclaimed Tom enthusiastically.

"Oh, I am so glad you whipped them," cried the girl, her face reflecting the delight which she felt.

"I knew I could put them to rout," said the youth quietly.

"Well, I can see now that you had reason for feeling confident," said Tom. "But before the encounter took place I could not think that one man could whip four."

"I could have killed each and every one of them had I so desired," said the youth, quietly.

"I suspected that you did not try to kill," said Tom.

"You are right. You see, they did not have any loaded weapons left after firing the two shots each, and I did not feel like killing them. They were practically unarmed, and it would have been too much like murder."

"But they tried to kill you," said the girl. "It was their own fault that their pistols were empty."

"Yes, that is true," was the reply, "but I thought it would do about as well to simply wound them. It will teach them a lesson."

"I guess there is no doubt regarding that part of it," said Tom, with a smile.

"And, oh, brother, now you are a patriot," cried the girl, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him.

"So I am, Lucy."

"And you will never again don a British uniform?"

"Never, Lucy."

"Oh, I am so glad."

"Well, I'm not sorry myself. To tell the truth, I have been bothered with doubts regarding the righteousness of the fight the king is making against the people of America, and had about made up my mind that I would leave the British army at the first favorable opportunity."

"Well, this will be as favorable an opportunity as you will get, I think," said the young man who had put the redcoats to rout.

"I am sure of it. This ends my career as a British soldier, and henceforth I shall fight on the side of the people who are struggling to achieve Independence."

"Here is my hand on that," said the youth, holding out his hand.

Tom seized it and shook it heartily.

"Now," he said, "if you will be so kind, I would like for you to tell us the name of the man who was able to perform the wonderful feat of putting four of the king's soldiers to flight."

"It will give me pleasure to tell you my name. It is Slater--Dick Slater."

"Dick Slater!"

Tom and his sister uttered the exclamation in unison.

"You don't mean to say that you are Dick Slater—the real, genuine, Dick Slater that has made such a wonderful reputation as a patriot scout, spy, and fighter, do you?" exclaimed Tom, excitedly.

Dick Slater—for it was indeed the famous patriot scout and spy—smiled. "I am the only Dick Slater that I have ever heard of," he said.

Tom seized the youth's hand again, and shook it heartily.

"Jove, but I'm glad to know you, Dick," he cried. "Do you know, I have heard many, many stories regarding you, and how you have slipped into the British encampments and played the spy successfully scores of times, and I have felt as if I would like to do as you have been doing. I have felt sorry that I joined the British, and now I am very, very glad that I have left the British army for good and all."

"And I thank you, Mr. Slater, for having caused him to do so," said Lucy.

"I am as glad as you are, miss," said Dick. "I consider that I have done a good stroke of business in robbing the British of a soldier, and adding him to the ranks of the patriots. If this could be done with a sufficient number, it would quickly end the war."

"So it would. And, oh, I wish the war would end."

"It will never end until the King of England withdraws his troops from American soil and acknowledges the Independence of the American people," said Dick quietly.

"That is what I think, too," said Tom. "And now, Dick, I am going to ask a favor of you."

"Go on," with a smile. "What is it, Tom?"

"I wish to be allowed to join your company of 'Liberty Boys,' of whom I have heard so many wonderful stories—that is, if you think I will be a good enough fighter to be numbered with them."

"I have no doubts whatever on that score, Tom, and I shall be very glad to have you join my company."

"Hurrah!" seizing his sister, and kissing her. "Isn't that just jolly news, Lucy? Just to think that your brother, who lately wore the British scarlet, is now to wear the Continental blue, and fight with the 'Liberty Boys'!"

"I am glad, Tom," said the girl.

"How far is it from here to your home?" asked Dick.

"About a mile, Dick."

"Then perhaps we had better be moving. Those redcoats were none of them seriously wounded, and they might take

it into their heads to slip around and try a shot or at us."

"That's so," agreed Tom. "Well, my horse is right by."

"And so is mine."

The youths quickly brought their horses forth from the timber, where they had been tied within thirty yards of each other, and then Tom mounted his horse and assisted Lucy to mount behind her brother.

He leaped into his saddle, and as he did so there came the sharp, whip-like crack of a pistol, and a bullet whistled within a foot of the youth's head.

"I thought so," he said. "I judge that it would be for you to get away from here in a hurry—unless you think it best that we should go into the timber, there, and find those redcoats up."

"No, let's let them go, this time, Dick."

"All right; away we go, then."

They rode down the road at a gallop, and although they expected to hear some more shots, they were agreeably disappointed.

It did not take long to reach the Warner home, and Dick saw that it was quite a nice home, there being a large, comfortable-looking house and a good-sized stable, and a number of sheds for stock.

They dismounted at the gate, and tying their horses, three entered the yard. "I'll send one of the hired men around to take care of the horses," said Tom.

They were almost to the door when it opened and a good-looking woman of perhaps forty years rushed out and seized Tom in her arms.

"My boy, my darling son," she exclaimed, kissing him. "I am so glad to see you, alive and well."

"And I'm glad to see you alive and well, mother," was the reply. "Where is father?"

"Here, Tom," cried a voice, and a man came around the corner of the house and shook hands with Tom heartily.

"I'm glad to see you, father," said Tom. "And now, let me introduce to you my friend, Dick Slater, captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' of whom you have often heard."

"Captain Dick Slater!" exclaimed Mr. Warner, seizing Dick's hand and shaking it heartily. "Well, I should say that I have heard of you, and frequently, too, and I am very, very glad to see one who has done so much for the Great Cause."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Slater," said Mrs. Warner, giving him her hand. "I have heard of you quite often, and I have more than once wished that Tom here, had followed your example in every way."

"Oh, mother," cried Lucy, her eyes dancing with delight. "Tom is a patriot, now, and has joined Mr. Slater's company of 'Liberty Boys'! Aren't you glad?"

"Indeed I am glad," seizing Tom and giving him another kiss. "Oh, Tom, this is the best news I have heard in a long time."

"Shake hands again, Tom," cried his father. "Jove, but I can feel proud of you. And if you should fall, my mother and I can both have the consolation that you have given your life in a glorious cause."

"That's right, father. I realize that I was wrong in joining the British army; but I have struck my last blow against my own people, and henceforth I shall fight for Liberty and Independence, and do all I can to help defeat the king's cause."

"This is a happy day and hour for all of us," exclaimed Mr. Warner.

"Come in the house," invited Mr. Warner. "We will have a talk, and then eat some supper."

They entered the house, and Mrs. Warner and Lucy went to the kitchen to get supper, while Mr. Warner, Tom, and Dick sat in the big sitting-room and talked of the war.

CHAPTER IV.

SCOUTING.

Dick had had a long ride that day, and his horse was quite winded, or he would not have stayed at the farm-house for any length of time. He knew he had quite a long way ahead of him, however, and so he decided to wait at the home of the Warners, and take supper. His horse could be pretty well rested by that time.

When supper had been eaten, Dick said he must go home. Mr. Warner said he would go also, and they went to the stable and saddled and saddled their horses, and led them around to the front of the house.

Then they bade Mr. and Mrs. Warner and Lucy good-by and rode away.

They headed for Morristown, where the patriot army was encamped, and rode at a good pace.

Three hours later they arrived at the encampment.

They rode at once to the headquarters of the "Liberty Boys."

The youths had not yet retired for the night, and they gave Dick joyful greeting.

"Where have you been, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook, a handsome fellow of about Dick's age.

"Oh, I've been around quite a good deal since leaving home, Bob."

"See anything of the redcoats?"

"I saw a few."

"Have trouble with them?"

"A little; but nothing to speak of. By the way, Bob, here is a new recruit for our company," and he introduced Tom Warner.

Bob gave the newcomer hearty greeting.

"Now, you make him acquainted with the rest of the boys, while I go and have a talk with the commander-in-chief," said Dick.

"All right," said Bob. And then, lifting up his voice, he called out: "Look this way, fellows."

All turned their eyes on Bob.

"Boys," he said, "this young man is Tom Warner, and he has joined our company."

"Glad to know you, Tom."

"You've done the right thing."

"How are you, my boy?"

"We welcome you to our ranks."

Such were a few of the greetings given the newcomer, and he bowed and smiled.

"We don't go much on ceremony," said Bob. "You will soon find out the names of the boys for yourself."

"Of course; that's all right," said Tom. "You couldn't introduce so many by name."

"No; it would take an hour."

Tom's army experience when in the British ranks had given him a knowledge of camp life, and he got along very well, and was soon chatting with some of the youths in his immediate vicinity.

Meanwhile Dick had gone to the house occupied by General Washington as headquarters.

The commander-in-chief had not yet retired, and he was glad to see Dick.

"You have been out on a scouting and spying expedition, I believe, Dick?" he remarked.

"Yes, your excellency."

"And did you discover anything of importance?"

"I think so, sir."

"What, Dick?"

"The British army is on the move!"

The commander-in-chief showed evidence of excitement at once.

"What's that you say?" he exclaimed. "The British army is on the move?"

"Yes, sir."

"The main army?"

"Yes; at least, so I judge."

"It is a large force, then?"

"There must be from fifteen to twenty thousand men on the march."

"Ha! and which way are they marching?"

"Southward."

"Southward from New York and Staten Island, eh?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"How far have they gone by this time, do you think, Dick?"

"Only a few miles since reaching New Jersey soil, sir."

General Washington was silent for a few minutes, evidently pondering.

"Yes, there can be no doubt regarding the matter," he said, presently, as if speaking to himself. "They are bound for Philadelphia."

"That is what I suspected, your Excellency."

"There can be no doubt of it, Dick."

Again the commander-in-chief was silent for a few moments, and then he summoned the orderly.

"Send General Greene here at once," he ordered.

The orderly saluted and withdrew.

A few minutes later General Greene entered the room.

"How are you, Dick?" he gave greeting to the youth. Then to the commander-in-chief:

"You sent for me, general?"

"Yes, General Greene; I have news for you."

"What is it?" with an air of interest. Greene knew from his superior officer's air and tone that the news was important.

"The British are on the march."

"Indeed! Which way are they marching?"

"Southward."

"Ha! They must be headed for Philadelphia."

"Such is my belief, General Greene."

"It cannot be otherwise. But I don't see where there is good generalship in that. Philadelphia is of secondary importance."

"You are right. The Hudson River is the key to the situation."

"So it is."

"The British look upon Philadelphia as the 'rebel capital,' as they are pleased to term it, and no doubt have got the idea in their heads that if they can capture the city it will be a severe blow to us."

"It would be a somewhat severe blow, true enough, but it would not be the worst blow that could be dealt us."

"No, indeed; but we must not permit them to reach Philadelphia if we can help it."

"Well, we can prevent them from doing so, I think."

"That is why I wished to see you. Don't you think we had better move over, and get in their line of march at once?"

"Yes. Where do you think would be a good place to take up our position?"

"I have been thinking, and have decided that Middlebrook would be a good location. From there we can move out quickly, and intercept the enemy, and on the heights there we will be safe, for double the British force could not dislodge or capture us."

"You are right. That will be a splendid place."

"And I think we had better get ready to move immediately."

"It would not be a bad plan, for we must get there ahead of the enemy."

"So we must. Well, I will give the order for the entire army to begin making preparations to break camp, and promptly at daybreak we will begin the march."

Soon the order was sent throughout the encampment, and the men were all excitement.

They were delighted as well.

They had been cooped up at Morristown so long that they had, as many of them expressed it, become rusty in the joints, and were glad that they were to move at last.

Preparations were begun for breaking camp, and the men worked steadily till two, and some of them till three o'clock.

They were up before daylight, and had cooked and eaten their frugal breakfast, and as soon as the first faint streaks of dawn shone on the eastern horizon the army broke camp, and the march was begun.

All day long they marched, stopping an hour at noon, for dinner and to rest, and late that evening they arrived at Middlebrook.

To say the people of that little village were surprised is stating the case mildly. They hardly knew what to think, and were considerably excited.

As soon as he had chosen his headquarters and got settled therein General Washington sent for Dick Slater.

"Well, Dick, we are here, and the time has come to begin work," said the commander-in-chief. "In order to know what to do, it will be necessary that a knowledge of the movements of the enemy must be before me at all times."

"So I understand, sir."

"This knowledge, of course, can only be obtained by means of scouts and spies."

"True, sir."

"As you have done so much good work for me in the past, Dick, and as I have every confidence in your prudence, shrewdness, and ability, I am going to place this part of the work in your hands."

"Thank you, sir. I appreciate the honor, and will do my best to see to it that you are kept fully informed regarding the movements of the British."

"And I am confident that you will be able to do so, Dick. You will be chief of the scouts and spies, until further notice, and I delegate the work to you, to be done in your own way. Take as many men as you think necessary, and send reports to me as often as you deem it necessary."

"Very well, sir; I will go to work at once."

"Do so, my boy."

After a little further conversation Dick saluted and withdrew.

He returned to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," and told them that he had work for them.

"That's what we like to hear you say, Dick," exclaimed Bob Estabrook.

"Yes, yes," from Mark Morrison.

"We need work, to get us waked up," said Sam Sanderson.

"Well, I think that we shall have some lively work, for a while, at any rate," said Dick.

"What is the work, Dick?" from Bob.

"We are to do scouting and spying."

"Good! That's the kind of work I like."

"The commander-in-chief has made me chief of scouts and spies," went on Dick, "and I am to use as many of you boys as I see fit."

"Well, you had better see fit to use all of us, Dick," said Sam Sanderson.

"Yes, yes," in chorus.

"I shall do so, boys. And you may get ready at once. We must locate the British army to-night, and this done, we must not lose sight of them for a minute."

"With so many of us to keep watch of the British, that ought to be easy enough of accomplishment," said Bob.

The youths at once began making preparations for their trip.

They bridled and saddled their horses, looked to their arms, and were ready.

Fifteen minutes later they rode out of Middlebrook, and away.

They rode almost due east.

"I rather think the British will aim to cross the Raritan

River at New Brunswick," said Dick to Bob, who rode beside him.

"That is likely, Dick."

"New Brunswick is right in their line of march."

"Yes, so it is."

"I hardly think they have reached New Brunswick as yet, and by going due east I have hopes of finding their encampment."

Onward the "Liberty Boys" rode.

It was not a moonlight night, but the stars were shining brightly, and it was possible to see to make their way along at a very good pace.

After they had been riding for an hour and a half, they found themselves on the summit of a wooded hill.

Here Dick gave the order to halt.

"If the British encampment is within three or four miles of here, I think we shall be able to discover its whereabouts," he said.

"How, Dick?" asked Bob.

"By climbing a tree and taking a look around."

"Ah, I understand. You mean that we will be able to see the campfires."

"Or the light made by them."

"Exactly. Well, up a tree I go," and Bob leaped to the ground.

Dick followed suit, and the two hastened to climb the tallest tree that stood on the top of the hill.

They were good climbers, and it did not take them long to reach the top of the tree.

Then they began looking all around them for some signs of the British encampment.

"Yonder is the British encampment, Dick!" exclaimed Bob, quickly. "See the light from the campfires?"

"Yes, Bob."

To the northward, seemingly a mile or so distant, could be seen a light such as would come up from a number of camp-fires.

"How far away do you think the camp is, Dick?"

"About a mile, I should say, Bob."

"That is what I should think."

They climbed back down to the ground.

"Did you discover the location of the British encampment?" was the eager inquiry from the youths.

"Yes," replied Dick. "It is about a mile away, toward the north."

"Good!" in a chorus.

Then Dick called one of the "Liberty Boys" by name.

"You will ride back to Middlebrook, Frank," he said, "and tell the commander-in-chief that we have discovered

the location of the British encampment, and that it is about three miles north from New Brunswick."

"All right, Dick. And shall I come back here when I have delivered the message?"

"Yes, Frank."

"All right. I'm off," and mounting his horse, the "Liberty Boy" rode away at a gallop.

"What are we to do, Dick?" asked Bob.

"We will go into camp right here, Bob," was the reply. "We are as close to the British encampment as we should go in a body, and this will be a good place to stay till morning."

"Are you not going to try to see what they are doing, Dick?"

"I may make a trip up to their encampment after a little, and take a look at them," was the reply.

Then Dick gave the order to go into camp, and the "Liberty Boys" hastened to obey.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL HOWE HEARS NEWS.

Unknown to the "Liberty Boys," a spy was watching them.

The spy in question was a tall, lank man, dressed in the garb of a hunter.

He watched the youths, and tried to hear their conversation, but was unable to get close enough for this.

"They're rebels, though, I know," he said to himself. "Yas, they're rebels, an' I guess ez how I'll go ter ther British camp an' tell 'em erbout et."

The fellow watched awhile longer, and having satisfied himself that the youths were going to remain where they were over night, he stole away, and when at a safe distance struck out boldly for the British encampment.

A brisk walk of fifteen minutes brought him to his destination.

When he neared the encampment he was hailed by a sentinel:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"Er frien'," was the reply.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

The man walked forward till he was close to the sentinel.

"Halt," the sentinel said, threateningly. "Don't advance another step till you give the countersign."

"I dunno enny countersign," was the reply.

"You don't?"

"No."

"How am I to know you are a friend, then?"

"Becos I say so."

The sentinel laughed shortly.

"That doesn't prove anything," he said. "It is easy for a man to say anything."

"Hain't this ther British encampment?" the man asked.

"Yes."

"Wal, I'm er loyal king's man, an' thet makes me er frien', don' et?"

"Yes, if you really are a loyal man."

"Wal, I am, all right."

"What do you want here?"

"I wanter see ther commander uv ther army."

"What for?"

"I have news fur 'im."

"News?"

"Yas; I hev sum information fur 'im."

"Is it important?"

"Ye bet et is."

The sentinel was silent a few moments, and then said:

"Stand where you are till I call the officer of the guard."

"An' will he take me ter ther commander?"

"I guess he will."

"All right. Call 'im ez quick ez ye kin."

The sentinel summoned the officer of the guard, and explained what was wanted.

"What is your name?" the officer of the guard asked.

"Sam Sharkley."

"Sam Sharkley, eh?"

"Yas."

"Where do you live?"

"All over."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean thet I don' live nowhars in purtickler. I jes' lives aroun' furst one place an' then another."

"What is your business?"

"Oh, I'm er hunter, mos'ly."

"A hunter, eh?"

"Yas."

"And you are a loyalist, you say?"

"Yas."

"And you say you have important information for the commander of our army?"

"I hev."

"You wish to be taken before him?"

"I do."

"All right. But you must remember, my friend, that if

you are a rebel spy, you are likely to never leave the camp alive."

"But I hain't er rebel spy."

"Of course you would say so."

"Et is so, too."

"I hope it is—for your sake."

The tall stranger laughed harshly.

"Oh, ye kain't skeer me," he said. "Ye kain't skeer Sam Sharkley, an' ye might jes' ez well go erhead an' show me ter ther commander."

"You are not easily scared, eh?"

"No."

"That is good. Come along. I will take you to the commander and see what he thinks of you."

"Go ahead."

The officer of the guard led the way into the encampment, the tall hunter-looking man following at his heels, and presently they came to a stop in front of a tent near the center of the encampment.

To the orderly who stood in front of the tent the officer of the guard said:

"Tell General Howe that a stranger who says he is a loyalist, and has important information to impart, desires to have an interview with him."

The orderly bowed, and entered the tent.

The sound of murmuring voices was heard, and then the orderly came forth.

"Enter," he said, addressing the tall man.

He held the flap of the tent back as he spoke, and the hunter-Tory entered the tent without hesitation.

General Howe sat on a camp-stool, in front of a small, portable desk, and he looked at his visitor keenly by the light of the candle which burned at one end of the desk.

He motioned toward another camp-stool.

"Sit down," he said.

The hunter did so.

"You wished to see the commander of the British army?" the British officer asked.

"Yas."

"You are a loyalist?"

"Yas."

"I am the commander. Why did you wish to see me?"

"I wanted ter give ye some informashun."

"Very well, what is it?"

"I made er diskivery, er leetle while ergo."

"You did?"

"Yas."

"What kind of a discovery?"

"I'll tell ye. I wuz walkin' through ther timber, down yender er mile er so, an' I come onter er party uv fellers."

"Ah!"

"They wuz on top uv er hill, an' er couple uv 'em clum up inter er tree, an' I heerd 'em torkin erbout seein' ther light uv camp-fires."

"Ha! They were spies, likely."

"Thet's whut I thort."

"There is no doubt regarding the matter."

"But I didn' know spies went in sech big parties."

"How many are there in this party?"

"Uv course I don' know, exackly, but theer mus' be clus ter er hunderd."

"A hundred."

"Yas."

"How are they—on foot or on horseback?"

"They hev horses."

General Howe was silent a few moments, evidently pondering. Then he said:

"You think the party is made up of rebels?"

"I'm shore uv et."

"And you think they were looking for our camp?"

"Yas. I think thet is whut they clum ther tree fur."

"I guess you are right."

The commander was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"The probabilities are that the party in question is made up of rebels who are scouting around the country, trying to keep watch of our movements, and it proves most conclusively that the rebels have full knowledge of our movements."

"Oh, theer hain't no doubt erbout thet."

"And you say they are on a hill about a mile from here?"

"Yas."

"You think they intend staying there all night?"

"Yas."

"What makes you think so?"

"They wuz onbridlin' an' unsaddlin' theer hosses when I came erway frum theer."

"That does look as if they intended to remain there all the rest of the night."

"I don' think theer's enny doubt erbout et."

"And what do you think they intend doing?"

"I dunno—'nless et is ter keep er watch onter ye."

At this juncture the orderly entered and said:

"Another man out here who wishes to have an interview with you, general."

"Send him in."

A few moments later a man who was dressed in the rough, homespun clothing such as was worn by the farmers of that day, entered the tent. He nodded to the British officer, and looked at the hunter somewhat curiously.

There was another camp-stool in the tent, and General Howe motioned toward it.

"Sit down," he said, and the man obeyed.

"What is your name?" the officer asked.

"Joe Smallwood."

"Are you a loyalist, Mr. Smallwood?"

"I am," was the decided reply.

"Where do you live?"

"Over clus ter Middlebrook."

"How far is that from here?"

"'Bout ten mile."

"West?"

"Purty nigh west, sir."

"So I thought. Well, why did you wish to see me?"

"I hev some informashun fur ye, sir."

"Ah, you have?" with a glance at Sharkley, who was staring at the farmer with a look of interest.

"Yas."

"What is the information which you have for me?"

"I wanted ter let ye know thet ther rebel army hed come!"

"What!"

General Howe was surprised, and stared at the speaker in amazement, not unmixed with dismay.

For a few moments he was silent, and then went on:

"Do you mean to say that the rebel army is at Middlebrook?"

The man nodded.

"Thet's jes' whut I mean ter say," he declared.

"The entire army, do you mean?"

"Wal, I sh'd think so. Theer mus' be eight er ten thousand men."

"Then it is the entire rebel army from Morristown."

"Yes, I heerd some uv ther fellers say they wuz frum Morristown."

"When did they arrive at Middlebrook?"

"This evenin'."

"Ha! And they have taken up their quarters there?"

"Yas—cn ther heights."

"Jove, this is bad news," murmured Howe. "I had hoped that we would be able to get across the country to Philadelphia without being interfered with, but now it looks as if we would have to fight."

"Et sartinly looks ez ef they wuzn't goin' ter let ye go on yer way onmolested," said the farmer.

"You are right. They undoubtedly mean mischief."

Then he turned to Sharkley, and went on:

"That explains the presence of that party you saw."

"I guess ez how et does," was the reply.

"Yes; they have ridden over here to scout around and find out where we are, and then they will keep watch of us, and keep their commander informed of our movements."

"Thet's whut they inten' doin', I guess, sir. But w'y kain't ye sen' er party uv your men up theer an' capter 'em?"

"I have been thinking of that," was the quiet reply, "and I think there is nothing to hinder me from doing so."

"I'll show yer men ther way ef ye want me ter."

"Thank you. That will be just the thing."

Then he turned to the farmer.

"Mr. Smallwood," he said earnestly, "I thank you for what you have done for us. You have brought me some valuable information."

"I'm glad ef I've done ennythin' ter he'p ther king's cause, sir," was the reply, "fur I'm er loyal king's man."

"Well, you have done a good deal, and I am much obliged—and to you, also, Mr. Sharkley, for the information which you brought."

"Thet's all right," was the reply.

At this instant the sound of a musket-shot was heard, this being followed by loud yells, which came from the edge of the encampment.

"What does that mean?" exclaimed General Howe, leaping to his feet.

CHAPTER VI.

DICK DOES SOME SPYING.

After the "Liberty Boys" had made all arrangements for passing the night on the hill, Dick announced his intention of going on a scouting expedition up in the direction of the British encampment.

"Let me go with you," said Bob.

"No, I will go alone, Bob. I don't intend trying to enter the camp, so will not take any chances."

"Well, be careful. Don't get captured."

"I'll be careful. I won't be gone long."

He took his departure, and walked rapidly toward the British encampment.

When he was within two hundred yards of the edge of the encampment, he began exercising great care, and approached very slowly and cautiously.

Presently he succeeded in taking up a position where he could see into the encampment, and yet where he was in no danger of being discovered by the sentinels, whose location he had made sure of.

He had been there but a few moments when he heard the sentinel on his right challenge some one, and after a little delay, the officer of the guard was summoned, and a few minutes later he conducted a man to one of the tents near the center of the camp.

The "Liberty Boy" had watched this with interest.

"Who can that fellow be?" Dick asked himself, "and why is he here? He looked like a farmer, and the chances are that he has come to bring some information. I wonder if he has discovered our presence in the vicinity?"

This was a disquieting thought, and Dick was on the alert. If the British were to learn of the presence of the "Liberty Boys," they might make an attempt to capture them.

"I will stay here and keep a sharp lookout," thought Dick; "and if I see a party getting ready to start out I will hasten back and warn the boys, and we will have time to get away before the enemy can get to us."

Ten, fifteen, twenty minutes passed, and then Dick heard the sentinel on his right give utterance to the challenge:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

There was no reply that Dick could hear, but after a very short interval the sentinel's voice again rang out:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

There was scarcely any interval between the sentinel's challenge, and the report of a musket.

"He has shot at somebody or something," thought Dick. "I wonder who or what it was?"

Instantly there was an uproar in the encampment.

The soldiers leaped up and seized their weapons, while many ran toward the point where the musket-shot had sounded from.

Dick, from his hiding-place, watched the scene with interest, and he kept his eyes on the tent into which he had seen the farmer disappear a few minutes before.

He had the satisfaction of seeing three men emerge from the tent, and he at once recognized General Howe.

"Jove, there's a fellow who looks like a hunter," thought Dick. "I am afraid our presence in this vicinity has been discovered."

The "Liberty Boy" held his place, for he reasoned that with the interest all centred in the direction from which the musket-shot had sounded the redcoats would not look in his direction.

Many of the redcoats were close to his hiding-place, however, and he could hear what they said.

Presently he heard the soldiers laughing, and then he heard one say:

"The sentinel shot a horse."

"A horse!" cried another.

"Yes; that old farmer that came to the camp a little while ago, left his horse out in the woods, a ways, and didn't tie him very securely, and the animal got loose and wandered toward the camp. He got close to the sentinel, who challenged, and getting no answer, let drive, and put a bullet into the horse."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed a number.

"What a joke!"

"I wonder did the sentinel kill the horse?"

"What does the farmer think about it?"

"I'll wager he is mad."

Such were a few of the exclamations.

"Yes, he killed the horse," was the reply.

"And the farmer came here to do us a favor, too," from another. "That is pretty hard on him, isn't it?"

"Yes, so it is."

It was a fact that the sentinel had shot the farmer's horse.

On emerging from the tent, General Howe, accompanied by the farmer and hunter, made his way to the point where the musket-shot had sounded from.

"What's the trouble?" the general asked, as he reached the spot.

The sentinel saluted.

"I am sorry, sir," he said, "but I heard a noise just out there in the timber, and I challenged twice, and receiving no reply, and the noise continuing, I fired, and I have killed a horse."

"I'll bet et's my hoss," exclaimed the farmer, and he hastened to where the dead animal lay.

"Yas, et's my hoss," he exclaimed, after a glance at the dead animal. "Blazes, whut'll I do now? How'll I git back hum?"

"I will make you a present of a horse to take that one's place, Mr. Smallwood," said General Howe.

"Oh, thank ye, sir."

"That is all right. We killed your horse, and should make the loss up to you. Take off the bridle and saddle and I will send you with one of my men to get another horse."

The farmer did as told, and then, as he was about to follow a soldier who had been instructed to lead him to the point where the horses were, he asked:

"Is theer ennythin' more ye wanted ter ax me, sir?"

"No; I have all the information that is necessary, and you are at liberty to go at any time."

"Thank ye, sir."

"Don't mention it. I am much obliged to you."

The soldier and the farmer crossed to the farther side of the encampment, and a horse was selected, and the bridle and saddle were put on the animal.

This done, the man mounted, and rode out of the encampment and away.

Dick, who saw all this, had half a mind to follow the farmer and try to force him to tell what his business had been in visiting the British camp, but on second thought he decided not to do so.

"I had better stay here and keep my eyes on the British," he thought. "They may make up a party and start toward the encampment of my 'Liberty Boys,' and if they should do that it would be important that I should get there quickly and give the boys warning."

Having so decided, Dick remained where he was, and kept his eyes on the British.

It did not take him long to discover that something was in the wind.

There was considerable bustle, and moving about among the soldiers, and an officer who had had a conversation with General Howe began giving orders, as Dick could see, though he was too far away to hear what was said.

Then the officer in question engaged the hunter-looking fellow in conversation, and the youth thought he understood.

"That is the fellow who has discovered our presence in the neighborhood and has brought the information to General Howe," he thought. "Likely he will act as guide, when the party has been made up."

The youth held his position, for he wished to learn, before leaving, the number of men that would be in the party.

Half an hour later the party was practically made up, and Dick estimated the number of men as being three hundred.

"We could offer successful resistance to that number," he thought, "but we are so near the main British encampment that they could get reinforcements in a very short time, and the result would be that we would be overpowered and forced to surrender. No, the best thing we can do is to get out of the way."

The youth knew that there was not much time to spare, so he stole away from his position, and made his way through the timber in the direction of the "Liberty Boys" encampment.

He was just stepping forward at increased speed, feeling

sure that he was out of hearing of anyone in the camp, when he felt himself seized from behind.

"I've got ye," a voice hissed in the youth's ear. "I've ketched ye, ye sneakin' rebel spy."

But Dick Slater was not the youth to tamely submit to capture.

He was taken by surprise, true, and this gave his assailant considerable advantage, but the youth did not feel that he was beaten yet by any means.

"If he will only keep his mouth shut for a few moments, and not yell for help, I think I shall be able to get the better of him and make my escape," was the thought that flashed through the "Liberty Boy's" mind.

It turned out as Dick hoped it would.

The man did not cry for help.

The probabilities are that he thought himself more than capable of capturing the youth unaided.

Likely he thought he had such an advantage in having taken the youth by surprise that he would have an easy time of it.

Be that as it may, he did not cry out.

Believing that it was to be a struggle man against man, Dick began exerting himself to even up matters.

He began struggling in such a fierce manner that his opponent must have been surprised.

"Oh, ye think ye'll git erway, do ye," hissed the man. "Wal, ye'll fin' thet ye kain't do et, nohow."

The "Liberty Boy" understood that this man was a Tory who was attached to the British army, acting as a scout and spy.

He believed himself more than a match for such a man under almost any circumstances, and he said coolly:

"You think I won't be able to get away, do you?"

"I know ye won't."

"Oh, you are positive of it, eh?"

"Yas."

"What makes you so positive?"

"Lots uv things. W'y, I've got ye so thet ye kain't do nothin', an' ye might ez well give up an' be done with et."

"Oh, I couldn't think of doing that."

"Ye hed better."

"No; I'm going to make it lively for you first."

"All right. Go ahead an' make et ez lively ez ye kin."

"That is just what I am going to do."

While talking Dick was working quietly, and now, of a sudden, he exerted his wonderful strength, and succeeded in breaking the hold of the man.

Instantly he whirled and grasped the fellow by the throat.

The Tory had become frightened when he felt his hold broken, however, and he gave utterance to a wild yell, which rang out loudly on the night air.

Instantly Dick dealt him a terrible blow on the jaw, and the fellow sank to the ground, dazed.

At the same instant the sound of footsteps was heard, and of voices also.

The redcoats had heard the Tory's yell, and were coming to investigate.

The youth knew it would not do for him to remain longer where he was.

He must get away from there.

And in a hurry, too.

Instantly he leaped away, and ran at the top of his speed through the timber.

The redcoats were soon at the spot where the encounter had taken place, and some of them stumbled and fell over the Tory's form.

He was just recovering the use of his faculties, and had started to regain his feet.

"Hello, who's this?" cried one of the redcoats.

"We're got him," cried another, and he seized hold of the Tory.

"I'm Simpson, one uv ther scouts," was the reply. "An' I hev hed er fight with er rebel, an' he hez got erway. Arter 'im, an' ketch ther cuss, men."

"A rebel?"

"A py!"

"Ater him, men."

"We must catch him."

"Which way did he go?"

"Dunno. He hit me a clip on ther jaw an' run erway, an' dunno w'ich way he went."

"Batter and go after him," cried one of the men. "We mabe able to catch him."

They obeyed, and went racing through the timber, leading out, fanshape, as they went; but to no purpose. They did not hear or see anything of the fugitive.

The Liberty Boy was too smart for them.

They ran onward a distance of a quarter of a mile or so, and then gave up the chase and returned to the encampment.

"I'd like ter get my han's on ther feller erg'in," growled the Tory. "He hit me er clip thet hurt, I tell ye," rubbing his jaw, "and I'd like er chance ter git even with n."

"We may run across him before we get out of these parts," said one of the redcoats.

"Yas, but ye see, I didn't see his face et wuz so dark, an' I wouldn't know 'im ef he wuz ter be took pris'ner."

"That's so. Well, you will have to give up the idea of getting even."

But this did not suit the Tory. He said to himself that he would find out who the rebel was that struck him, and would then get even with him for the blow.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRITISH IN NEW BRUNSWICK.

Dick Slater hastened onward in the direction of the encampment.

He heard the redcoats pursuing him, but this did not bother him to any great extent.

He did not believe that the redcoat lived who could overtake him in the timber, after night.

"I would like no better fun than to play hide and seek with the redcoats if I had nothing else to do," he said to himself.

But he had something else to do.

He must get back to the encampment and warn the "Liberty Boys" that the redcoats were coming for the purpose of trying to capture them.

So he hastened onward.

Soon he could hear no sounds of pursuit.

That made no difference, he kept on at the same rapid gait, for he realized that the sooner he reached the camp, the better it would be.

There would not be much time to spare.

Soon he was at the bottom of the hill, and he ran it at almost as great speed as he had been going on the level ground.

The next minute he burst into the encampment.

"Up, boys," he cried. "Hurry. We will be attacked by a large force of redcoats if we remain here very much longer."

The "Liberty Boys" were lying around, on blankets, but were up in an instant.

"What's that?"

"The redcoats coming?"

"Can't we fight them, Dick?"

"How big a party is coming?"

"It won't do to show fight, boys," said Dick.

"Why not?" from Bob Estabrook.

"We are too close to the British encampment. They could get reinforcements in twenty minutes, and would soon have us overwhelmed."

"Then we will have to get away from here?"

"Yes; get ready as quickly as possible."

The youths rolled up their blankets, bridled and saddled their horses, and in a few minutes were ready.

"Come," said Dick, and he led the way down the hillside.

When they were at the bottom they mounted and rode away.

"Where will we go, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I'll tell you, Bob; we'll go halfway around the British encampment, and take up a position on the north side of it."

They rode onward for half an hour, and then Dick called a halt.

"I think we will be safe in going into camp here," he said.

The youths quickly dismounted, unbridled and unsaddled their horses, tethered them out, and then, spreading their blankets on the ground, threw themselves down to get some rest.

Sentinels were stationed, and soon the encampment was quiet.

* * * * *

The party of redcoats under the leadership of the officer, and guided by the Tory hunter, Sharkley, made its way in the direction of the hill on which the hunter had seen the "Liberty Boys."

It did not take them long to reach the spot, and after they had wasted a quarter of an hour in creeping up the hillside, they were treated to the disappointment of finding that there was no enemy there.

The party of "rebels" had disappeared.

"They're gone!" gasped Sharkley.

"There is nobody here, that is certain," said the British officer, disappointment being displayed in the tone of his voice.

"They wuz heer an hour ergo, when I headed fur your camp ter tell ther commander uv your army erbout et."

"Likely they had spies out, and discovered that we were coming, and got away in a hurry."

"Et looks thet way."

"Well, it can't be helped. They are gone, and we have no means of knowing in which direction they have gone, so about all we can do is to return to the encampment and make our report."

"I guess yer right."

The officer gave the order to return, and the party made its way back to the encampment, moving slowly.

As soon as they arrived there the officer made his way to the tent occupied by General Howe.

"Well, what luck?" that officer asked.

The other shook his head.

"No luck at all," he replied. "They were gone."

General Howe nodded.

"I suspected as much. I did not hear any firing, and made up my mind that you had found the enemy missing."

"Yes. There was no sign of rebels to be seen anywhere."

"Well, it can't be helped."

"No."

"They must have had spies out, and discovered that our move was on foot for their capture."

"That's what I think, sir."

"Yes."

They talked a few minutes longer, and then the officer saluted and withdrew from the tent.

The encampment was soon plunged in silence, and the soldiers slumbered, only the sentinels being awake.

Next morning the British army marched to New Brunswick, and came to a halt.

General Howe and his officers held a council, and talked the matter over. Should they march onward, or should they stop in New Brunswick for awhile, till they could learn what the "rebels" intended doing?"

After considerable discussion it was decided to remain in New Brunswick for a few days. They realized that the patriot army was at Middlebrook, as the Tory army had said, they would not dare proceed, for the "rebels" would come in behind them, and cut off their communication with New York.

Scouts and spies had been despatched to Middlebrook for the purpose of verifying the information brought by the farmer-Tory, and it was deemed advisable that they go to camp and await the return of the scouts, at any rate.

After that it could be settled what course they should pursue.

An order was given that the soldiers should go to camp, and the order was hailed with delight by the soldiers for they were where they could take their ease. There were where they could get tobacco and liquor, and where there were girls to look at and talk to.

About the middle of the afternoon one of the scouts that had been sent out appeared in New Brunswick, and went at once to the house occupied by General Howe headquarters.

"Well, what is the word?" asked the general. "Did the old farmer tell the truth?"

"Yes, general."

"The rebel army is at Middlebrook, then?"

"It is."

"The entire rebel army, do you think?"

"I should judge so, sir."

"There is a large force, then?"

"There must be eight or nine thousand men."

"That is the entire rebel force, then."

"It must be."

"Yes; where have they taken up their quarters?"

"On what are called the 'Heights' of Middlebrook, sir."

"How is it? Accessible, or not?"

The scout shook his head.

"I don't believe twice our force could storm the position successfully, sir."

"Humph. That will do."

The scout saluted and withdrew.

General Howe called a council, and when the officers had put in an appearance, he told them what the scout had reported to him.

"Now, what shall be done, gentlemen?" he asked.

This was something of a poser in the way of a question.

The officers hardly knew what it would be best to do, under the circumstances.

They talked for an hour, and when they got through they were no nearer a solution of the matter than when they commenced.

General Howe then told them to return to their quarters, and assemble again at nightfall.

"Perhaps by that time we will have thought of something," he said.

And the officers said that perhaps this would be the case, and dispersed.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE BRITISH ENCAMPMENT.

The "Liberty Boys" had been up bright and early that morning, and the youths Dick sent out for scouting service returned to the camp while the youths were eating breakfast, with the information that the British army was on the march.

"In which direction is it headed?" asked Dick.

"Southward."

"Very well. We will follow them, presently, and see where they go."

As soon as breakfast was finished, Dick despatched a messenger to General Washington at Middlebrook, stating that the British army was on the march, and was headed southward, toward New Brunswick.

Then the youths bridled and saddled their horses, mounted, and followed the British army at a leisurely gait.

Indeed, they were forced to stop two or three times, and wait for the British to get some distance ahead of them, as the redcoats were on foot, while the youths were mounted.

They usually made their stops on the tops of hills, and from there it was possible to keep watch of the enemy, and see where it was, and just what was going on.

At last the Raritan River was reached, and the British army marched across the bridge, and into the town.

The "Liberty Boys," stationed on a hill on the farther side of the river, watched closely, and saw that the redcoats came to a stop.

One, two, three hours passed, and still the army remained in New Brunswick.

"Finally the youth who was up in the tree, watching, reported that the redcoats were going into camp.

This news interested Dick not a little, and he climbed the tree and took a long survey of the scene in the village.

"It really looks as if they have decided to stop there awhile," he said.

"You are right, Dick," replied Sam, who was the youth that was up in the tree with him.

"I wonder what it means?"

"I don't know."

"I rather suspect what it means," went on Dick, after a few moments' thought.

"What?"

"The redcoats have learned that the patriot army is at Middlebrook, and have decided to stop in New Brunswick for awhile, till they learn what our army intends doing."

"Likely that is it."

"I think so. Well, I will send a messenger to the commander-in-chief at once, and tell him what the British are doing."

Dick climbed down and despatched a messenger, with instructions.

"What will we do, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"We will remain right where we are, Bob."

"All day?"

"Yes, and likely all night."

"We will simply keep watch on the enemy, eh?"

"Yes; until night, at least."

"And then what?"

"Then I think I shall make an attempt to find out something definite."

"Ah, you will venture into the town?"

"Yes."

"That will be dangerous."

"Yes, somewhat dangerous."

"I don't think that what you are likely to learn is worth taking such risks for, Dick."

"You do not?"

"No."

"Well, I do."

"But why not remain at a safe distance, keep watch, and in that manner keep the commander-in-chief informed of the movements of the British?"

"That would be doing very well if we could do no better; but if we could secure advance knowledge of the intentions of the enemy, General Washington could then make his plans accordingly, and it would be a big thing for our army."

"So it would; but gaining the information is the difficulty."

"I know that; I may fail, but I shall make the effort."

"Say, Dick, if you are determined to venture into the town, and which amounts to venturing into the lion's den, let me go with you."

The youth shook his head.

"You won't?" in a disappointed voice.

"No, Bob. In a case of that kind the fewer there are the better it is. I shall go alone."

"But supposing you get into trouble? What will you do? If alone you will be unable to put up anything of a fight."

"Well, what more could two do, Bob?"

"Not much, that's a fact."

"Not when we would be in the midst of thousands of enemies."

"That's right."

"No; it would be foolish to attempt to fight, under such circumstances."

"That's so. Flight would be the only thing to attempt."

"And one can make as good a fist of that as two or more."

"True."

"So I shall go alone, and it shall be my endeavor to keep from being suspected."

"You had better make a success of the attempt, Dick."

If you don't, I think it will be the last we will ever see of you."

"I fear so. You may be sure I shall exercise all possible caution."

The rest of the afternoon wore away, and evening came.

The "Liberty Boys" ate their frugal supper, and then Dick began making preparations for the trip into the town.

He donned an old, ragged suit of citizen's clothing, put on a pair of shoes that were full of holes, and an old hat that had seen much better days. He pulled his hair down over his eyes, smeared some dirt on his face, and asked his comrades what they thought of his appearance.

They told him that they thought he would pass for some worthless vagabond.

"If there should happen to be anyone there who knows you, Dick, they would never recognize you in that make-up," said Bob.

"You think not?"

"I know it. Why, I wouldn't have known you, myself, if I had met you in the road in broad daylight."

"I'm glad of that. Well, I think I shall be able to fool the British all right."

"There is very little doubt on that score."

The "Liberty Boy" was in no hurry to start out, however.

He waited till it grew quite dark, before starting.

Then, bidding the youths to be very careful, and keep a good watch in order to avoid being taken by surprise by some of the British, he took his departure.

It did not take him long to reach the Raritan River.

He stepped onto the end of the bridge, and made his way slowly and cautiously along.

He wondered if there would be sentinels at the other end of the bridge.

He feared that there would be.

His fears were realized.

When he was within fifty feet of the end of the bridge he was challenged:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"A friend," he replied.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign."

The youth advanced until he was close enough to the sentinel to see him dimly in the darkness.

"I dunno ther 'countersign," said Dick, imitating the talk of a farmer.

"Then you can't cross the bridge."

"I kain't?" in surprise.

"No."

"But I'm alreddy ercross, mister."

"No, not quite."

"Wal, mos' all ther way, so ye might jes' ez well let me go ther res' uv ther way."

"Oh, no; I couldn't think of doing it."

"Then do et without thinkin'."

The sentinel laughed.

"Say, you're a funny fellow, aren't you," he said, sarcastically.

"Not thet I knows uv. But I want ter git ercross ther river, mister, an' ef ye'll let me, I'll be much obleeched ter ye."

"You wish to enter the town?"

"Yas."

"Why do you wish to do so?"

"I hev sum bizness ter 'tend ter, mister."

"What is the business?"

"Wal, fur one thing, I wanter git sum groceries—coffee'n sugar an' sichlike stuff."

"Yes. And what else?"

"Sum med'cine fur dad."

"Some medicine for your father, eh?"

"Yas."

"What ails him?"

"He's got ther fever."

"Anything else you wish to get?"

"Noap."

"You are not wanting to secure information regarding the British army?"

"Noap."

"You are sure you are not a rebel?"

"Oh, yas, I'm shore uv thet."

"You are not a spy, then?"

"Noap."

"Where do you live?"

"Two miles frum heer, mister."

"In which direction?"

"Mos'ly ter ther north, but some ter ther wes'."

"What is your name?"

"Sam Butler."

"All right, Sam; I guess I will let you pass."

"Thank ye, mister; thank ye," said Dick, and then he walked past the sentinel, and strode onward.

"Mind you," called out the sentinel after him, "if you are a rebel spy, you are as good as dead and buried already."

"Oh, I hain't no rebel spy," was the reply, and Dick walked briskly onward.

"Well, now I am safely in the town—in the British en-

campment," thought Dick. "The next thing is to find out what the enemy intends to do."

CHAPTER IX.

DICK IN DANGER.

This was easier said than done.

To get safely within the British encampment was no mean achievement, true; but to learn what he had come there to learn was much more difficult.

Indeed, he was not at all sure that he would be able to do so at all.

He would make the attempt, however.

While doing so he might at least pick up a few items which would be of interest, possibly of use to the commander-in-chief of the patriot army.

The brave "Liberty Boy" walked steadily onward.

He did not go at a rapid pace, however.

Instead, he moved slowly but steadily, and as he went he kept his eyes wide open.

His first task was to find the headquarters of General Howe, the British commander.

This would, of course, be the place where information was to be secured, if anywhere.

Still, he might pick up scraps of news by listening to the talk of the soldiers, and wherever he saw a crowd of soldiers congregated he usually paused nearby for a few minutes, and listened.

But if the soldiers knew anything about the intended movements of the army they did not let the fact out in their conversation, for he heard nothing that gave him any inkling regarding the probable movements of the British force.

To the contrary, he heard one or two make the remark that they hoped the army would remain where it was for awhile, which was proof positive that they knew nothing of a certainty.

Dick was afraid to make inquiries of any of the redcoats regarding the headquarters of the British general, so he stopped a man who looked like an inoffensive citizen of the town, and asked him if he knew where the headquarters were.

"Yes," said the man. "The British general has his quarters in a house in the middle of the next block."

"Thank ye," said Dick.

"You are welcome. You'll know the house, for there are two sentinels stationed in front of it."

"Thank ye," said Dick again, and then he shuffled onward.

"I'm glad he spoke about the sentinels," he said to himself. "I might have run up onto them, otherwise, and they might have asked too many questions and become suspicious."

He walked onward till he came to where he could get a very good view of the front of the building. He paused and surveyed it carefully.

"It is a detached house," he said to himself. "I am glad of that. Perhaps I may be able to effect an entrance at the rear."

He turned down a side-street, and made his way along till he came to an alley.

He turned up the alley, and presently paused at the rear of the house occupied by General Howe and his officers.

All was dark, there, and silence reigned.

The servants had undoubtedly finished their work and gone to bed.

Dick leaped over the fence and approached the back door.

When he reached the door he paused and listened.

Hearing no sound in the house he tried the door.

To his surprise it opened before his touch.

He glanced around to see if he was seen, and then, feeling sure that he was safe, he stepped through the doorway, into the house.

Pushing the door shut, he stood perfectly still and listened for at least a minute.

He was standing in complete darkness, and could neither see nor hear a thing.

Thinking that it was likely that General Howe had a suite of rooms upstairs, Dick decided to go up and make an investigation.

He felt around till he found a door, and opening it, he passed through into what he suspected was the kitchen.

He felt his way along the side of the room, and presently found what he was looking for—a stairway leading to the second floor.

He made his way up the stairs, and was soon in a hallway, which extended, he had no doubt, the entire length of the building.

Away toward the end of the hall was a faint glimmer of light, and the youth had no doubt but that this was where the British general would be found.

He made his way along the hall, and when he was almost to the farther end he came to a door under the bottom of which came a faint stream of light.

The murmur of voices could be heard, proving that there was more than one person in the room beyond the door, and Dick stooped, placed his eye to the keyhole, and peeped in.

Right in his line of vision was a table, around which were seated five or six British officers. On the table were bottles and glasses, and a box of cigars, and the officers were smoking, drinking, and discussing the matter which Dick wished to hear discussed—viz., whether or not they should remain in New Brunswick for awhile, or push onward toward Philadelphia.

The matter was under discussion when Dick reached his position, and he applied his ear to the keyhole and listened with interest.

The officers were divided in their opinions, and the discussion went on with considerable energy. The wine they were drinking aided in making the officers talk much and loudly, and it was not difficult for the youth to hear all that was said.

Of course, had the redcoat officers been in camp somewhere, where it would have been likely that listeners might be near, they would have been more careful, but they did not think it possible that an enemy could be near, and so they talked as loudly as they wished.

The conversation went on for half an hour or more, and at last General Howe stated that they would remain where they were until it was found out what the intentions of the "rebels" were.

"But how will we find that out?" asked one of the officers.

"In various ways."

"What are the ways?"

"Well, for one thing, we will send spies among the enemy."

"And for another thing?"

"We will send a large detachment of soldiers on toward the southwest, as if bent on marching to Philadelphia, tomorrow, and see what action the rebels take."

"That will be a good scheme," said another approvingly. "I should think that would make the enemy show his hand."

"That is what I expect it to do," said General Howe, with an air of satisfaction.

"You think the rebels have spies watching us, then?" asked another officer.

"Oh, yes, without doubt."

"That is likely, and of course, as soon as the spies see some of our force marching away they will think the entire army is going to move."

"Yes, so they will. And they will rush off to Washing-

ten with the information, and we shall see, then, what he intends doing."

"So that is your plan, is it?" thought Dick. "Well, I am glad that I happened to be here to-night, to overhear your plans. I will send the information to the commander-in-chief, and he will know just what to do."

The youth listened for a while longer, and most of the talk related to details, and was not of especial interest, and Dick decided that it was time he was getting away from there. He turned and started to move back along the hall, but suddenly felt himself seized by strong hands. At the same time a voice called out sharply:

"Help! Thieves! Robbers! Spies! Help!"

Instantly there was the sound of shuffling feet, and the upsetting of chairs in the room, and Dick realized that the British officers would be out upon him in a few moments.

He at once began struggling with his assailant, who proved to be a stout fellow.

He was no match for Dick, however, and the youth speedily got loose from the fellow's grasp, and just as the door flew open and the officers came rushing out into the hall Dick got a good hold on his opponent, and lifting him bodily, threw him against the officers, upsetting several and causing great confusion.

The instant he hurled the man from him Dick turned and sped along the hall, and he had reached the farther end before the redcoats recovered their senses sufficiently to understand what was taking place.

Then two or three of the officers drew pistols and fired, but as it was dark, and they fired by guess, none of the bullets hit the youth.

He bounded down the stairs, and into the kitchen, and as he did so he heard the sound of footsteps in the hallway he had just left.

The officers were pursuing him.

"Let them come," he said to himself. "They can't catch me."

He hastened across the kitchen, passed through the doorway, into the hall, and opening the rear door, leaped out into the back yard.

He ran rapidly across the yard, leaped the fence into the alley, and as he did so he heard the voices of the officers, as their owners emerged from the house.

"Rebels! Spies!" roared the stentorian voice of General Howe. "On guard, everybody, and capture the spy. Don't let him escape."

This would certainly be heard, Dick was sure, and he kept his eyes open as he ran down the alley and neared the cross street.

Just before he reached the street he ceased running, and walked calmly forth from the alley.

"Hello, there. Have you seen the spy?" cried one of a party of redcoats who were coming down the street at a rapid walk.

"No, I hain't seen no spy," was the reply, and Dick started to pass them, but they barred his way.

"Hold on. Don't be in such a hurry," said one.

"Maybe he's the spy, himself," suggested another.

"That's what I was just thinking," said the one who had first addressed Dick.

"I hain't no spy," said Dick. "I'm er servant from one uv the houses up ther street, an' hev come out ther back way, an' am goin' ter see my gal."

A chorus of laughter went up from the redcoats.

"That's a pretty story to tell," cried one.

"We can't take your word for anything, my friend," from another. "Some one up yonder is crying out that there is a spy hereabouts, and you may be the spy. So we will have to take you prisoner, and hold you until you establish your innocence."

"Oh, say, don' do thet," protested Dick. "Sally'll git mad ef I don' come ter see her, an' mebbly she'll git another feller. Ye mustn' be so hard onter me."

"We can't help it if Sally does get another fellow. We must do our duty. Seize him, fellows."

The men leaped forward, intent on seizing Dick and making a prisoner of him.

CHAPTER X.

THE RUSE THAT FAILED.

There were seven of the fellows, and of course they had no doubt regarding their ability to capture the one man.

Then, too, they more than half believed that the youth was what he represented himself to be, so did not expect to meet with resistance, and were careless.

The result was that Dick took them by surprise.

He suddenly attacked them, and knocked three down, and tore his way through the remaining number with such fierceness that they could not stop him.

As Dick bounded away, however, they became suddenly very much alive.

They realized that this must be the spy, after all, and they set out in pursuit, yelling at the top of their voices, to attract the attention of others.

The "Liberty Boy," realizing that he must run as he had never run before, if he was to make his escape, fairly flew over the ground.

The party of seven redcoats was quickly augmented to a score, and this grew till there were at least a hundred in pursuit of the youth.

In all that hundred, however, there was not one who was Dick's equal as a runner, and he dashed onward, gradually increasing the distance between himself and his pursuers.

He darted down alleys, around corners, and through vacant lots, used every trick and device to enable him to throw the redcoats off the track, and he managed to bother them not a little.

They hung on his trail pretty well, however, and the youth realized that if he should be headed off in front he was in great danger.

At last he was close to the end of the bridge, and as he drew nearer he saw the sentinel standing, musket in hand.

"Halt!" the sentinel cried. "Who are you, and where are you going?"

"I'm after a rebel spy!" cried Dick. "Didn't he come this way?"

"No; I haven't seen anyone," was the reply. "But hold on! I don't——"

He got no further, for Dick was close up to the fellow, now, and evading the bayonet-thrust which the sentinel made, Dick struck out, and knocked the redcoat down.

Then he bounded onward, and was soon making his way across the bridge.

When he was within fifty yards of the farther end of the bridge he heard voices, and as he drew nearer the end, saw a party of men approaching.

There were five or six in the party, the youth judged, and hoping to avoid them, he exerted himself to get off the bridge before they reached it.

He was almost successful, but not quite. The men were right at the end of the bridge as he got there, and as they saw him coming they uttered exclamations.

"Hold on."

"Who are you?"

"Where are you going?"

"Stop!"

"Stop!"

Such were a few of the orders given, but Dick paid no attention. He realized that his only chance lay in keeping right on going at a lively rate, and instead of stopping he increased his speed, and darting to one side, as he went off the end of the bridge, he tried to avoid the newcomers.

"A rebel!"

"A spy, likely."

"Stop him."

"Don't let him get away."

"Seize him."

Such were a few of the cries given utterance to, and the redcoats attempted to put their words into execution.

This was easier said than done, however.

The youth was not one who could be easily stopped.

He leaped right at the redcoats, when he saw they were not going to let him pass, and began striking out right and left with all his force.

He had a quick eye, and was enabled to land nearly every one of the blows, and the result was that he had knocked several of the redcoats down almost before they knew what was happening.

Then he burst on through and ran as if his life depended on it—which was very nearly the case.

As soon as the redcoats realized that the stranger was on the point of escaping, they set out in pursuit, yelling like fiends.

They fired several shots, some of which came fairly close, but none of which hit the fugitive, and Dick ran onward, gradually increasing the distance between himself and pursuers.

Finally he got clear out of sight of them, and then he took it easier, and later on reached the "Liberty Boys" encampment in safety.

He found the youths considerably excited, however. They had heard the firing, and had feared that Dick had gotten into trouble.

"What was that firing about, Dick?" asked Bob.

"They were shooting at me," with a smile.

"I thought so. I told the boys I'd wager you had gotten into trouble."

"I met some redcoats as I was coming away, right at this end of the bridge across the Raritan, and they tried to stop me."

"They didn't succeed, however, eh, old man?"

"Well, I'm here, as you see."

"Did you learn anything of interest or value, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Yes, I learned enough to pay me for going."

"That's good. And what are you going to do next?"

"We will break camp, and return to Middlebrook."

"Are all of us to go?"

"I shall leave half a dozen of the boys here to keep watch of the British."

The youths quickly made their preparations, and half an

hour later all but half a dozen rode away, headed for Middlebrook.

A two-hours ride brought them to their destination, and Dick went at once to headquarters.

The commander-in-chief had not yet retired.

Seldom did he go to bed before midnight. He was usually busy up till midnight, planning, studying, and figuring on the best way to beat the British, and it was to this never-sleeping vigilance that much of his success was due.

He was glad to see Dick.

"Oh, you are back, Dick?" he exclaimed. "I think you have news for me."

"Yes, your excellency," replied Dick. "I have news for you."

"What is it, Dick?"

"I have learned that the British are going to remain for awhile at New Brunswick."

"Ah! Then they have learned of our presence in Middlebrook."

"Yes. Their scouts have informed them of that."

"They fear to march onward toward Philadelphia with us here so close, eh, Dick?"

"Yes, sir. They say they would be cut off from communication with New York, and they don't like that idea."

"I suppose not."

"But to-morrow they are going to try a ruse, sir."

"What are they going to do, Dick?"

"They are going to send quite a large force of men on toward the south, as if the intention was for the entire army to continue the march."

"What is their idea in this?"

"They wish to learn what you will do under such circumstances."

General Washington smiled grimly.

"Well, I think they will find out," he said quietly.

"How large a force do you think they will send, Dick?"

"I don't know, but would judge about one thousand."

"Then I shall at once send two thousand men to intercept them and drive them back upon New Brunswick."

"I thought you would wish to do something of that kind, sir, and that is the reason I came back with my 'Liberty Boys.' We will wish to be of the party that goes, sir, as we have not had a fight for quite a while, and my boys are getting eager and impatient to get at the enemy."

"You shall go, Dick."

"Thank you, sir."

The commander-in-chief, after he had secured all the information in Dick's possession, sent for some of his officers,

and gave orders for the force of two thousand men to get ready to march.

He told his officers what was to be done, and an hour later the force was on the march.

It marched till about two o'clock in the morning, and then went into camp at a spot four or five miles from New Brunswick, in a southwesterly direction.

It was thought that the British would come past where they were, if they marched in the direction of Philadelphia, and all that would be necessary would be for the patriots to wait for the enemy to put in an appearance.

The rest of the night passed quietly, and the little army was up and had breakfasted by an hour after sunup.

The force was then stationed in the best possible manner, to enable it to strike the British a hard blow when they should put in an appearance, and scouts were sent out to keep watch for the coming of the enemy.

About ten o'clock a scout came in with the report that the enemy was coming.

It was about a mile away, he said, and he said further, that there was nearer two thousand than one.

"That is all right," said General Greene, who was in command. "We have the advantage of position, and will take them by surprise and consequently at a disadvantage, and should be able to send them to the right about pretty quickly."

Orders were sent along the patriot lines, for the men to be in readiness to begin the attack at the signal, and then all waited as patiently as was possible, for the coming of the enemy.

They did not have long to wait.

The advance column came in sight a few minutes later, and closer and closer the redcoats came.

The patriot force was divided into two parties, and half was on one side of the road, and half on the other. The patriots were strung along the road for a distance of a third of a mile, and the men were instructed to let the enemy march clear the length of the patriot lines before opening fire.

This was done.

When at last the front of the British column was even with the farther end of the patriot line, the signal was given for the attack to begin.

This signal was the firing of a single pistol-shot by General Greene, and the instant the sound of the shot was heard the patriots opened fire.

Crash—roar—boom!

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

In an instant the peaceful scene, with the redcoats

snarching along, laughing and talking, was transformed to a scene of utter confusion and disorder.

The British column was torn to pieces, practically, and became a mass of surging, shrieking, yelling, cursing, groaning humanity.

They had been struck when least they expected it, and the shock of the surprise was a great aid to making their demoralization complete.

The patriot force did not let up for an instant. Having made a success of the surprise, it was eager to go ahead and hit the enemy as hard a blow as was possible, and the pistols were brought in play, and the crack, crack, crack! of these weapons was heard all along the line.

The British officers shouted orders, and finally managed to get their men to fire a couple of volleys, and then, seeming understanding that they could not hope to cope successfully with the foe, orders were given to retreat, and this order was obeyed with alacrity. Indeed, many of the redcoats were already running back up the road.

Fifteen minutes later the British were back out of the trap, and they came to a stop at a safe distance, and the officers had a council.

The result of this council was that a soldier was sent forward with a flag of truce.

"What is wanted?" asked Dick, who had been sent out to meet the redcoat.

"My commander has sent me to ask that his men be permitted to bury their dead and look after their wounded," was the reply.

The youth reported to General Greene, who said:

"Tell him that the permission is granted, and that we will not bother them while they are so engaged, but that after this work has been attended to they will have to look out for themselves."

Dick bowed, and went back to where the soldier stood, and told him what General Greene had said.

"Very well," said the soldier, and he hastened back to the British force.

Soon a large force of British advanced, and buried their dead comrades, having dug the graves with swords and bayonets, and then the wounded men were carried back to the point where the main force was waiting.

At once the entire force began a retreat toward New Brunswick. The men marched on the double-quick, and while the patriot force followed for a mile or more, and fired several volleys, not much damage was done.

The patriots were well satisfied, anyway, even as things were. They had struck the British a hard blow, and had driven them back to New Brunswick.

Leaving scouts to keep watch of the British, the patriots marched back to Middlebrook, and General Greene went at once to headquarters and reported to the commander-in-chief.

General Washington was well pleased.

"I am glad that you struck them a good, hard blow, General Greene," he said. "I think it will be a lesson to them, and make them careful. Indeed, I think it will put a stop to their attempting to march upon Philadelphia."

"They may make a few more attempts," said General Greene, "but as you say, this experience will make them exercise great caution in future."

CHAPTER XI.

"BOXING THE EARS OF THE BRITISH LION."

Soon after dinner that day Tom Warner came to Dick, and asked permission to go out to his home.

"I would like to see how the folks are getting along," he said.

"Have you any fears that they have got in trouble, Tom?" Dick asked.

"Well, I'll tell you, Dick," was the reply. "There is a Tory out in that neighborhood who has been trying to get Lucy to promise to be his wife, and the last time he was there—so she told me the other day—he threatened that, if she did not promise to marry him, he would come and carry her away by force, and make her marry him."

"Well, he is an insolent scoundrel, isn't he!"

"Yes. And he feels important because he is a recruiting officer for the British, and he goes around with a couple of British soldiers to help him, and forces men who are in doubt which side to favor to come over to the British side and join the British army. He doesn't like father, because of the fact that he is a strong patriot, and he would like to force sister Lucy into a marriage with him to spite father as well as to please himself."

"You shall go, Tom," said Dick, "and some of us will go with you. It might come in handy to have a few of us along, in case the Tory and his comrades should happen to be there, and bent on mischief."

"That's so. And I shall be glad to have some of you boys go with me, Dick."

"All right. I'll get half a dozen, and we will set out, at once."

(Continued on page 28.)

OUT TO-DAY! OUT TO-DAY!

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(Continued from page 26.)

Half an hour later six "Liberty Boys" rode out of Midlebrook, and away, in the direction of Tom Warner's home.

The six consisted of Dick Slater, Tom Warner, and four of the youths who had expressed a desire to be of the party.

They rode in a gallop, and were but little more than half an hour in reaching the Warner home.

Tom was overjoyed to find his folks at home, safe and sound.

They gave him a joyous greeting, and were pleased to see Dick once more, also, for they had not forgotten the aid he had rendered Lucy and Tom when the redcoats had halted Lucy on the road a few days before.

"Has Jim Sheldon been here lately, Lucy?" Tom asked, as soon as the greetings had been exchanged.

"Yes, Tom. And, oh, I want to tell you what he said. He said that he would be back, this afternoon, and that I might as well be ready to go with him, for if I did not go willingly he would take me."

"The scoundrel," grated Tom. "He said that, did he?"

"Yes; and he meant it, too, Tom. You have no idea how savage he looked and talked."

"Well, we'll stay right here till he comes, and we'll take the savageness out of him, eh, Dick?"

"Indeed we will."

"He has been made a real officer in the British army," said Lucy, "and he wears a British uniform and feels as if he were the greatest man in the world."

"Well, we'll take that feeling out of him," said Tom, grimly.

"You say he threatened that he would return this afternoon, Miss Lucy?" said Dick.

"Yes, Mr. Slater."

"Then I'll tell you what we will do, boys. We will take our horses around to the stable, out of the sight of the scoundrel, and then we will wait till we see him coming, after which we will conceal ourselves behind this stone fence, here, and then Lucy can come out here and meet Sheldon, and tell him that he had better go about his business. Of course, he will refuse to go, and then we will rise up and make him go."

This struck the boys as being a good plan. They would enjoy giving the fellow a surprise and fright, and were right in for it.

They led their horses around to the stable, and into it, and leaving them there, made their way back to the front

porch, where they took seats—all save Tom, who went out to the fence, and kept a watch for the enemy.

He was not there long before he turned his head and called out cautiously:

"They're coming."

"How many?" asked Dick.

"There's three of them."

"We'll go out to the fence and hide behind it," said Dick, "and as soon as the fellows get here you come out and warn them away, Miss Lucy. Then we will choose a moment that is appropriate, and rise up and give the red-coated scoundrel a surprise."

The five "Liberty Boys" hastened out to the stone fence, and a glance showed them Tom was right. Three red-coated men were approaching at a gallop.

The six youths dropped down behind the stone fence, and were entirely concealed from the view of anyone, even though the person might be just beyond the fence.

The youths peered through the crevices between the stones, and when the three horsemen were within a few yards of the spot Dick gave Lucy a signal, and the girl rose and came out to the fence. She walked through the gateway, and as the three redcoats leaped to the ground and advanced, she met them within ten feet of where the "Liberty Boys" were concealed, the stone fence being between.

"Why are you not ready?" asked the leader, who was the man, Sheldon. His voice was harsh and arrogant, and it was easy to see that he thought he was important and all-powerful, in fact, in so far as the present affair was concerned.

"I am not ready, for the reason that I do not intend to go with you," was the prompt reply, in a clear, ringing voice.

"Not going to go with me, you say?"

"No."

The fellow laughed hoarsely.

"And how, if I may ask, are you going to help yourself?" he asked.

"I will help myself, never fear," was the confident reply.

"Bosh! you can't help yourself, and if your father interferes we will shoot him dead in his tracks. Get your things and come along, Lucy Warner. The preacher is waiting for us, at no great distance."

"He will just have to keep on waiting, then," was the prompt reply. "The preacher does not live who will ever say the marriage ceremony with you and I as the chief actors, Jim Sheldon. In fact, I would die before I would marry you! I hate you—despise you!"

"Bosh! You are mistaken. You just imagine it. After you have found out what a fine fellow I am, you will feel differently toward me."

"You a fine fellow? No, you are a scoundrel! I will never have any feeling other than hatred toward you."

"See here, Lucy, I don't like to be talked to in that manner," growled Sheldon; "and as a salve for my wounded feelings I think I shall have to take a kiss or two."

He took a step forward, evidently bent on putting his words into effect, but he did not succeed.

"Take that for your impudence!" cried the spirited patriot maiden, and with the words she gave the British officer a box on the ear.

It was a resounding slap, and must have hurt, for a curse escaped the man's lips, and he drew back as if to strike the girl, but at this instant the six "Liberty Boys" rose up from behind the stone fence, and Dick Slater said in a cool, calm voice:

"I would not do it if I were you, Mr. Sheldon. It would be the height of impoliteness—would be unmanly, indeed, to strike a lady, and as I have already remarked, I would not do it if I were you."

Now, the "Liberty Boys" were six, while of the redcoats there were but three, which made the odds two to one in favor of the "Liberty Boys," and they did not for a moment think that the three would try to attack them. The youths thought that the chances were that the three would make a break for their horses, leap into the saddles, and dash away at the top of the animals' speed.

But they did not do this. It was the unexpected that happened, for suddenly the leader, Sheldon, cried out: "Draw your pistols and shoot the scoundrels down, boys!"

But the redcoats were dealing with youths who were altogether out of the ordinary. Under Dick's instruction the youths had practiced drawing their pistols quickly, and firing snapshots, and now the wisdom of such practice was shown, for before the three redcoats could get their weapons cocked the youths had their weapons out, cocked, and had fired.

One volley was all that was necessary. The three redcoats went down, and they were dead.

"I am sorry that this occurred in your presence, Miss Lucy," said Dick, "but they made it necessary."

"That is all right, Mr. Slater," said Lucy, shuddering and smiling at the same time. "I do not like to see such things, but I would much rather see them lying there than to see you men there. I am more than satisfied."

"I am rather glad the fools tried to attack us," said Tom. "It forced us to kill them, and now I will feel

easier, as I know Sheldon won't be bothering you, Lucy, any more."

Mr. and Mrs. Warner had been horrified spectators of the affair, but, like Lucy, they were well satisfied, because of the fact that it was the enemy that had suffered, and not the youths who were their friends.

A spade was procured, and the "Liberty Boys" buried the three dead men, taking the bodies to quite a distance, as it would not be pleasant to have them buried near the house.

The youth remained at the Warner home and took supper, and Mrs. Warner and Lucy exerted themselves to get up a meal that the youths would enjoy.

They succeeded admirably, too. A number of chickens were killed and dressed, and were fried nicely, and everything in the way of dainties that the larder afforded was brought forth for the occasion. There were fruits, jams, jellies, and preserves such as are only to be found in perfection on the tables of farmers, and it was a supper that was remembered by the "Liberty Boys" for quite a while, it being in such contrast to the suppers they usually ate when on the march.

After supper they bade the Warners good-by, and rode back to Middlebrook.

The British remained at New Brunswick for more than two weeks, General Howe making a number of attempts to fool General Washington, and get past and on to Philadelphia, but the commander-in-chief of the patriot army was too shrewd for the British general, and foiled him at every point, the result being that the British were forced to return to New York city.

The attempt to march across New Jersey to Philadelphia was an utter failure.

THE END.

The next number (96) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' DARING; OR, NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING," by Harry Moore.

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Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, December 8, 1898, by Frank Tousey.

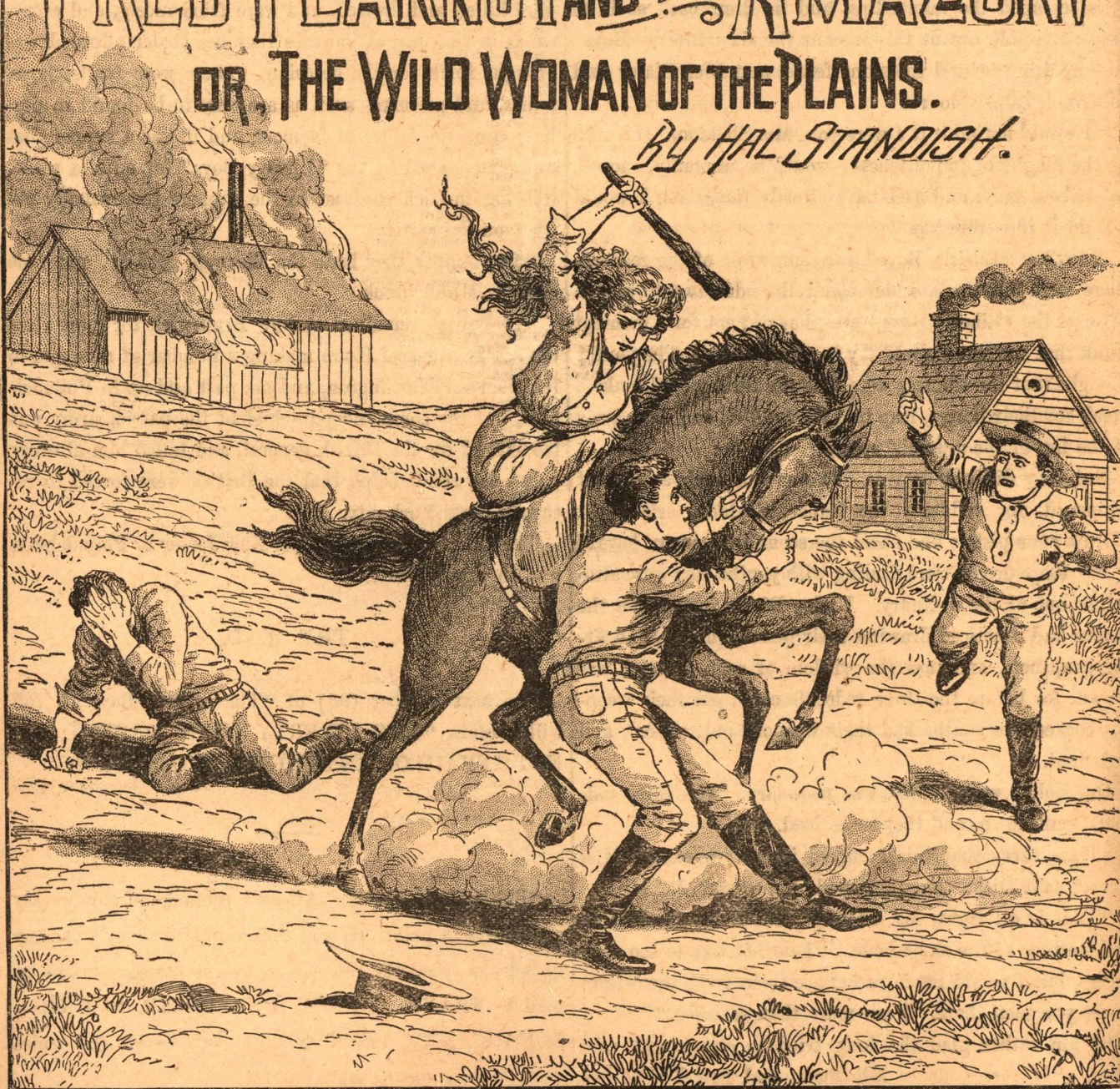
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She downed the cowboy with the club and Fred caught the bit to arrest her. "I'll kill you!" she screamed as she raised the club above her head to brain him.

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